

THE CORRESPONDENT.

MAGNA EST VERITAS ET PREVALEBIT.

BY GEORGE HOUSTON, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

No. 4.

NEW-YORK, FEBRUARY 14, 1829.

VOL. 5.

CORRESPONDENCE.

An examination of Dugald Stewart's essay on man's constitutional knowledge of deity; in a letter to a friend.

New-York, January 25, 1829.

Dear sir—Your letter of the 12th inst. was duly received, together with the paper accompanying it. The extract from professor Stewart's philosophy, which you marked for my particular and unprejudiced reading, I have carefully perused; and I think I can, paying all due deference to the talents of its author, analize, detect, and more particularly prove the inapplicability, and futility of the arguments there adduced, than Mr. Stewart can prove the existence of spiritualities.

It has been observed that all persons are, by nature, qualified for some particular purpose; and the object, or subject, in which they excel is called their *forte*. Whether it is from nature, or from education, that my mind has been turned on religious subjects, it is nevertheless a fact, that I feel more at home, and more capable of supporting an argument on that topic than on any other. But leaving this to answer for itself, I shall go on with my design of reviewing the essay. It appears to me that Mr. Stewart has drawn from his grounds deductions which are incorrect and unnatural; and these charges it is my intention to prove to you in the most plain and satisfactory manner.

First, then, in speaking of the lower animals, he observes, that "some of them seemed to be placed in this world chiefly for the use of man, so wonderfully are their instincts adapted to his nature." Is this not a most glaring contradiction of nature and of facts? Instead of animals being made by God for the use of man, is it not more in accordance with his infinite mercies, and with common sense, to suppose that man, seeing they exist, and are within his power, has made them subservient to his purposes? Because, by sacrificing their lives, he finds he can procure the "dainties of the festal board," that are highly gratifying to his taste—sacrificing thousands, and tens of thousands, of lives to gratify, to feast, to pamper, and to glut the stomach of one being! Is it necessity or instinct that impels man to sacrifice the lives of beasts, to support and feast his own? Or is it a beastly, inordinate disposition to gratify the palate with delicacies? Before the dog has tasted of mutton he is contented with other fare; but once learn him its sweetness, and the means

of procuring it, and he will spare no exertions to obtain it; and will probably say with man, that it was made for the use of dogs, "so wonderfully are the instincts of mutton adapted to their natures." It has been ascertained, by naturalists, that animals always accommodate their wants to their abilities, and their abilities to their wants; thus animals, that have for a great length of time, through successive generations, subsisted on animal food, have, from an extinction of prey, been obliged to obtain a subsistence from the productions of the earth; and by thus changing their diet, their organs of mastication and digestion have gradually changed, and adapted themselves to the necessities of the animals. It is not because man has the *right*, but because he has the *power*, to make the lesser animals subservient to his purposes.

"If man," says our author, "was intended only to be an inhabitant of this globe, and if the principle of curiosity was bestowed on him only in subserviency to his accommodation here, whence is it that he is in general led to enquire more anxiously about distant and singular phenomena, than about those which, from their nearness and frequency, we should expect to be the most interesting?" The answer is self-proposed; it requires no deep thought; it is this—the same curiosity which impels the child to use the rattle, actuates it in laying it aside when something new is presented to it. As the objects around us become stale, from our familiarity with them, we look abroad for something new with which to gratify our curiosities. As familiarity invites us to an extension of view, though our love of change, our physical powers of gratifying that disposition increases with our growing familiarity with immediate objects; and as our curiosities strengthen with our abilities of indulging them, we are led on from one object to another, till we have exhausted all the sources of curiosity within the scope of our researches; or till curiosity becomes extinct by the destruction of its principles. Another reason why human nature, when it has arrived at manhood, extends its researches beyond immediate objects, is because those objects have lost their power of engaging or attracting the curiosity, by their familiarity with the senses, when the mind was least capable of enjoying or appreciating their sources of real interest; and because those sources of real interest are shut from the enjoyment of the physical senses, and only revealed to the matured, to the enlightened, and the cultivated mind.

I will answer this query (the last question from the essay) in old Yankee style—by proposing another. If the human mind, from its extending its inquiries beyond the objects in its immediate vicinity, proves its destined immortality, why is it that the greatest and most enlightened minds, (which our author must allow as approaching nearer to divinity than the less enlightened) why is it that they almost universally confine their researches to the investigating of proximate objects? The reason is obvious; it is because they can touch the latent springs which reveal the secret, and the most interesting traits of nature's works; and can thus disclose to themselves the most magnificent objects to engage their curiosity, without wandering to foreign fields of enquiry, to gratify a sensual disposition to change. Before proceeding farther, I must be indulged in one remark, the propriety and justness of which will not, I think, be questioned by any person acquainted with polemic rules or

common equity—a man should never advance an opinion which he cannot support by concomitant and efficient arguments; and should never base an argument on mere theory, leaving it to his opponent to ascertain its correctness. Mr. Stewart has been guilty of aggression in both these respects. He has, in the first place, acknowledged a hereafter, without efficient proofs; and then, secondly, brings forward an argument which is undoubtedly very subtle, but at the same time full of sophistry; viz. if man is not destined for eternity, why is he endowed with the abilities to investigate abstruse matters, or foretell future events? Has he proved, has he sought to make the argument good, that these abilities in man are endowments? and that they are not his by natural and inevitable cause and effect? Or has he proved that the nature of beasts is not the same as that of man, differing only in the combination of faculties? Or has he proved that the beasts of the field could not have arrived at the same degree of knowledge with man, if they were capable of communicating their ideas? and that man's superiority does not so much consist in the knowledge he has acquired, as in the means he possesses of acquiring it? Or has he proved that there is not almost as great a difference between the inferior and superior brutes, as there is between the superior brutes and man? and that this difference in the brute creation does not effect a difference in their destinies? When Mr. Stewart can prove these positions, then, and not till then, can he prove that man is not fated, like the beasts of the field, to perish in oblivion.

To be continued.

LECTURES ON KNOWLEDGE.

BY FRANCES WRIGHT.

LECTURE I.

Concluded from page 42.

So long as the mental and moral instruction of man is left solely in the hands of hired servants of the public—let them be teachers of religion, professors of colleges, authors of books, editors of journals or periodical publications, dependent upon their literary labors for their daily bread, so long shall we hear but half the truth; and well if we hear so much. Our teachers, political, scientific, moral or religious, our writers, grave or gay, are *compelled* to administer to our prejudices and to perpetuate our ignorance. They dare not speak that which, by endangering their popularity, would endanger their fortunes. They have to discover not what is true, but what is palatable: not what will search into the hearts and minds of their hearers, but what will open their purse-strings. They have to weigh every sentiment before they hazard it, every word before they pronounce it, lest they wound some cherished vanity or aim at some favorite vice. A familiar instance will bring this home to an American audience.

I have been led to inspect, far and wide, the extensive and beautiful section of this country which is afflicted with slavery. I have heard in the cities, villages and forests of this afflicted region, religious shepherds of all persuasions haranguing their flocks; and I have never heard one

bold enough to comment on the evil which saps the industry, vitiates the morals, and threatens the tranquillity of the country. The reason of this forbearance is evident. The master of the slave is he who pays the preacher, and the preacher must not irritate his paymaster. I would not here be understood to express the opinion, that the preaching of religious teachers against slavery would be desirable. I am convinced of the contrary—convinced that it would be of direful mischief to both parties, the oppressor and the oppressed. To judge from the tone but too generally employed by religious writers in the northern states, where (as denunciation against the vice of the south risks no patronage and wins cheap credit for humanity) negro philanthropy is not so scarce—to judge, I say, from the tone employed by northern religionists, when speaking of their southern neighbors and their national crime and affliction, one must suppose them as little capable of counselling foreign as home offenders—as little capable of advising in wisdom as of speaking with gentleness. The harshest physician with which I am acquainted is the religious physician. Instead of soothing he irritates; instead of convincing he disgusts; instead of weighing circumstances, tracing causes, allowing for the bias of early example, the constraining force of implanted prejudice, the absence of every judicious stimulus and the presence of every bad one; he arraigns, tries, convicts, condemns—himself accuser, jury, judge executioner; nobly immolating interests which are not his, generously commanding sacrifices which he has not to share, indignant-ly anathematizing crimes which he cannot commit, and virtuously kindling the fires of hell to consume sinners for whose sins he is without sympathy. I would not be understood, therefore, as regretting in this matter the supineness of the southern clergy; I would only point it out to you, desirous that you should observe how well the tribe of Levi know when and where to smite and when and where to spare.

And though I have quoted an instance more peculiarly familiar to Americans, every country teems with similar examples. The master vice, wherever or whatever it be, is never touched. In licentious aristocracies, or to look no farther than the towns and cities of these states, the rich and pampered few are ever spared, or so gently dealt with, as rather agreeably to tickle the ear than to probe the conscience; while the crimes of the greatly tempted, greatly suffering poor are visited with unrelenting rigor.

Is any discovery made in science tending to open to us farther the book of knowledge, and to purge our minds of superstitious belief in occult causes and unsubstantiated creeds—where has it ever found opposers—or might we not say, persecutors? Even among our hired preachers and licensed teachers of old doctrines and old ways. Is any enquiry instituted into the truth of received opinions and the advantage of existing practice—who are the last to encourage it? nay, the foremost to cry out “heresy!” and stop the mouth in knowledge? Who but those who live by the ignorance of the age and the intolerance of the hour? Is any improvement suggested in our social arrangements, calculated to equalize property, labor, instruction and enjoyment; to destroy crime by removing provocation, vice by removing ignorance, and to build up virtue in the human breast by exchanging the spirit of self-abasement

for that of self respect—who are the foremost to treat the suggestions as visionary, the reform as impossible? Even they who live by the fears and the vices of their fellow-creatures ; and who obtain their subsistence on earth by opening and shutting the door of heaven.)

Nor, as we have seen, are our licensed and pensioned teachers the only individuals interested in disguising the truth. All who write for the public market, all who plead in our courts of law, all who harangue in our halls of legislature, all who are or who aspire to be popular servants or popular teachers of the people, all are *compelled* to the support of existing opinions whether right or wrong, all, more or less do, and more or less must pander to the weaknesses, vices and prejudices of the public, who pays them with money or with applause.

I have said not only that they do, but that they *must*; and most assuredly they must conciliate the popular feeling, or forego the popular favor. Here is intended no satire upon any individuals, professions nor employments. The object is merely to expose a fact, and a fact highly important to be known; that as, to be popular, men must not speak truths, so when we would hear truths, we must seek them from other mouths and other pens than those which are dependent upon popular patronage, or which are ambitious of popular admiration.

And here, then, is the cause why I have presumed to reason with my fellow-creatures; why, in my earliest youth I devoted myself to their condition, past and present; why I searched into their powers and their capabilities, examined the practice and weighed their opinions: and why, when I found these both wanting, I volunteered to declare it. I believe that I see some truths important for my fellow-beings to know; I feel that I have the courage and independence to speak that which I believe. And where is the friend to his species that will not say: "Happy, most happy, shall it be for human kind, when all independent individuals, let them be male or female, citizens or foreigners shall feel the debt of kindness they owe to their fellow beings, and fearlessly step forth to reveal unbought truths and hazard unpopular opinions."

Until this be done, and done ably, fearlessly and frequently, the reign of human error must continue; and with human error, human vice and human suffering. The advocates of just knowledge must be armed with courage to dare all things, and to bear all things, for the truths they revere; and to seek, as they may only find, the reward of their exertions in the impression, great or little, slow or rapid as it may be, which their exertions may produce on public opinion, and through the public opinion, on the public practice.

Of all errors the most dangerous is that which is most common, indifference. Ninety-nine out of a hundred—nay, it might not be too much to say nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand—pay no attention to the nature of their opinions; their justice, or their injustice, their truth or their error. (They conceive it safer and wiser to go with the stream, in thought as in action.) They would say, and they frequently do say: "Why should we make ourselves unpopular or singular by differing from our neighbors? What matter is it if we believe this way or that way, so as we do but avoid criticism and persecution?" My friends! it matters every thing. On the justice of our opinions depends the practice, depend also our feelings; and unless you are prepared to say that

your practice is unimportant and your feelings unimportant, do not conceive that your opinions can be unimportant. Would all men seek true opinions, we should not have so many dissentient creeds and fire-side as well as market-place disputes. There are indeed many ways of thinking, yet there is but one *right* way; and that way can only be found in the paths of knowledge. We must first understand what knowledge is; we must then get knowledge; and then, having knowledge, we must have just opinions; and in proportion therefore, as we all acquire just knowledge shall we all agree in opinion.

And is it not desirable that we should agree in opinion? Is disputing and quarrelling agreeable or advantageous? Are all the bad feelings which arise out of contradictory opinions, conducive to happiness? Do we love each other and aid each other in proportion as we differ from each other? if we do not, and if we consider it desirable to live in peace and harmony and good fellowship, let us be no longer indifferent to our opinions; and let us engage in the acquisition of knowledge.

We have now sufficiently considered the leading subject of those preliminary investigations which we have undertaken with a view to aid us in the acquisition of knowledge. We have ascertained the real nature and object of knowledge. We have examined also some of the errors vulgarly entertained on the subject, and many of the impediments which now obstruct our advances in the road of improvement. We have seen that just knowledge is easy of acquirement, but that few are interested in revealing its simple principles: while many are driven by circumstances to misinterpret or dissemble them. We have remarked that to accelerate the progress of our race two means present themselves; a just system of education, and a fearless spirit of enquiry; and that while the former would remove all difficulties from the path of future generations, the latter would place far in advance even the present. We have also observed on the advantage which would accrue to mankind, if all independent individuals would volunteer the task for which appointed teachers and professional men are now but too clearly unfit, by devoting themselves to the promulgation of truth without regard to the fashionable prejudices. I have been led also incidentally to advert to the influence exerted over the fortunes of our race by those who are too often overlooked in our social arrangements and in our civil rights.

Leaving to others more qualified by practical experience to point out in detail the errors prevalent in our existing mode of education, I shall, at our next meeting, consider the other of the two enumerated means of improvement, viz. free enquiry. And as this is for us of the present generation the only means, so shall I endeavor to show how much it is our interest and how imperiously it is our duty, to improve it to the utmost.

It is with delight, that I have distinguished, at each successive meeting, the increasing ranks of my own sex. Were the vital principle of human equality universally acknowledged, it would be to my fellow-beings without regard to nation, class, sect or sex, that I should delight to address myself. But until equality prevail, its towards the oppressed and depressed that I every where especially and anxiously incline. For by whom is instruction most needed? Even by those who possess the

least of it; who, not unfrequently, possess so little, that they suspect not their own deficiency.

Nor is the ignorance of our sex matter of surprise, when efforts, as violent as unrelaxed, are every where made for its continuance.

It is not as of yore; Eve puts not forth her hand to gather the fair fruit of knowledge. The wily serpent now hath better learned his lesson; and, to secure his reign in the garden, beguileth her not to eat. Promises, intreaties, threats, tales of wonder, and alas! tales of horror are all poured in her tender ears. Above, her agitated fancy hears the voice of a God in thunders: below she sees the yawning pit; and before, behind, around, a thousand phantoms conjured from the prolific brain of insatiate priestcraft, confound, alarm and overwhelm her reason!

Oh! were that worst evil withdrawn which now weighs upon our race, how rapid were its progress in our knowledge! Oh! were men—and, yet more, women—absolved from fear, how easily and speedily and gloriously would they hold on their course in improvement! The difficulty is not to convince, it is to win attention. Could truth only be heard, the conversion of the ignorant were easy. And well do the hired supporters of error understand this fact. Well do they know, that if the daughters of the present and mothers of the future generation were to drink of the living waters of knowledge, their reign would be ended—"their occupation gone." So well do they know it, that far from obeying to the letter the command of their spiritual leader, "be ye fishers of men," we find them every where fishers of women. Their own sex, old and young, they see with indifference, swim by their nets; but closely and warily are their meshes laid, to entangle the female of every age.

Fathers and husbands! do ye not also understand this? Do ye not see how, in the mental bondage of your wives and fair companions, ye yourselves are bound? Will ye fondly sport in your imagined liberty, and say, "it matters not if our women be slaves." Will ye pleasure yourselves in the varied paths of knowledge and imagine that women, hood-winked and unawakened, will make the better servants and the easier playthings? They are greatly in error who so strike the account, as many a bankrupt merchant and sinking mechanic, not to say drowning capitalist, could bear witness. But, setting aside dollars and cents, which men in their present uncomfortable state of existence are but too prone exclusively to regard, how many nobler interests of the mind and heart cry "treason!" to this false calculation?

To-morrow evening we shall consider those interests, which will naturally present themselves during our investigations on the subject of free enquiry. In what just knowledge consists we have cursorily examined; to put ourselves in the way of attaining that knowledge, be our next object.

He who will not reason, is a bigot. He who cannot reason, is a fool. He who dares not reason, is a slave.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1829.

PAINE'S BIRTH DAY.

Concluded from page 45.

After the ode was sung, which we published in our last, the following toasts were given from the chair:—

2. "Common Sense"—its supporting pillars are truth, justice, fidelity, and humanity; and its canopy wisdom.
3. "Rights of man." May this be our motto and our guide; and let us, in pursuit of them, be "steady as time, and relentless as the grave."
4. The "Age of Reason"—may it convince man that he only wills it to be mentally free.
5. The people—the foundation of all power.
6. The laws—may they be founded on liberty, and liberty be guarded by the laws.
7. The liberty of the press—the sacred flame which purifies all opinions. (Drank with three.)

The secretary now rose, and spoke as follows:—

Mr. Chairman—Although we are at present assembled for the purpose of celebrating the anniversary of the birth of the immortal PAINE, it cannot fail to be in the recollection of almost every one present, that this is also the anniversary of the formation of the NEW-YORK FREE PRESS ASSOCIATION.

Two years have just elapsed since I had the pleasure of suggesting, at a meeting similar to this, a *union* of all the friends of liberal principles. Through the machinations of the enemies of truth, they had long been unknown to each other, and without *concert* it was impossible to act with effect. A close and intimate intercourse would enable them to counteract the secret influence of the priesthood, who are unceasing in their efforts to banish from society, or utterly to ruin, every man who ventures to have an opinion of his own on religious subjects.

The proposition was hailed with acclamations, and a committee of fifteen, then present, was appointed to carry it into effect. On the first meeting of this committee, the task of preparing rules for an association, was devolved on a sub-committee of three; who finally delegated their powers to me. In discharging that duty, I acted under the impression, then common to all, that as the contemplated association was to be entirely different from every other society, and as its members professed to be guided solely by reason and experience, it was only necessary to report a concise declaration of our views and principles, and two or three rules as to the admission of members—the maintaining order at the meetings, and regulating the disposal of the money that might be received.

A few regulations of this simple nature were accordingly drawn up; which, on being reported at a general meeting, were unanimously approved of. Conforming strictly to these, and having only one object in view—viz. the diffusion of liberal principles, the association rapidly increased; and theological and scientific lectures were delivered every Sunday, which attracted crowded and respectable audiences of both

sexes. Alarmed by these proceedings, the superstitionists resorted to every means they could devise to break us up. We were calumniated in the newspapers; secret influence was employed to deprive us of a place of meeting; and there is even reason for believing that, at least, one individual, a member of a church in this city, joined us for the purpose of creating dissension, in the expectation that this would produce a dissolution. We have also had to combat with difficulties arising from the misconduct of other individuals, who associated with us from improper motives. Against the admission of such characters it is scarcely possible to guard in any society; the more especially if that society, like ours, is in its infancy.

But our greatest troubles have been occasioned by a departure from the rules adopted at the original formation of the association, and which were set aside by the introduction of a multifarious code of regulations totally inapplicable to a society like ours. The history of mankind sufficiently demonstrates, that a multitude of laws, like a multiplicity of creeds, so far from promoting harmony, or establishing correct views, only tend to excite discord, and to confound all ideas of justice.

Great, however, as these difficulties have been, I think I may safely say that they are now overcome; that the dark clouds which for a time obscured the horizon, have cleared away, and that bright prospects present themselves to encourage those to persevere, who from the beginning have never swerved from the principles which originally formed the bond of union of the *Free Press Association*. To give effect to these principles, it is unnecessary to waste our time in unproductive legislation. All that is required is to take Reason for our guide; and, instead of attempting to fetter and cramp our energies by a useless set of regulations, and frivolous disputation, to adopt for our government the laws of honor. By conforming to these, and these only, nothing can arise to occasion disputes. The mind will be at full liberty to apply itself to the study of topics best calculated to promote the objects contemplated by our union; and if any thing like rivalry should exist, let it be a rivalry as to who amongst us can do most to spread a knowledge of the truth. All other objects are incompatible with the views of this association.

It is unnecessary for me to remind you of the powerful effect which the existence of the *Free Press Association* has had on public opinion. You are sufficiently aware that, while in the East, and in the West, in the North, and in the South, the very name has been a terror to the spiritual tyrants of our country, the extensive promulgation of our principles has given birth to a spirit of investigation as impossible to arrest as it is to stay the universe in its course; and that thousands, who formerly dared not even to think, are now actively engaged in the diffusion of philosophical truths.

With such undeniable evidence before us of the benefits hitherto resulting from the exertions of the *Free Press Association*, and that, too, while so many formidable obstacles stand in the way of its progress, we have every inducement not to relax in our labors to free mankind from the galling chains of superstition, forged by an artful, unprincipled, and arrogant priesthood.

- The chairman now gave,
8. The progress of liberal principles—though slow, yet as steady and untiring as time.
 9. May superstition be driven from the world by the efforts of philosophy and science.
 10. May Christians abandon slavery, though their founder had not the humanity to forbid it.
 11. The advocates of political and theological liberty, who are bold enough to be honest, and honest enough to be bold.
 12. The female republicans of every clime. (Drank with three.)
 13. The memory of Thomas Jefferson.
 14. The memory of Voltaire, Holbach, Palmer, Volney, and all others who have written in defence of truth.
 15. Simon Bolivar—may the bulwark of republicanism, which he has erected in South America, defy all the attempts of tyrants to overthrow it.

VOLUNTEERS.

By James Dean, Philadelphia. May the friends of civil and religious liberty be on their guard against the insidious and indefatigable attempts of the priesthood to produce a union of church and state; that engine of crusades, massacres, inquisitions; and the tyranny of the clerical order.

By the same. Let the people read, examine, and think for themselves—then will civil and religious liberty be in no danger from their enemies.

By Dr. Haslem, Baltimore. Frances Wright—a true philanthropist; the persevering and fearless promulgator of virtue and liberal principles. (Drank with three times three.)

By Benjamin Dutton, Baltimore. The efficient *Trinity*—Thomas, Paine, Andrew Jackson and Frances Wright. (Drank with three.)

Ode. "To Liberty's Enraptured Sight." By Mr. Burger.

By a visitor. The Correspondent—may the light of its liberality soon discover it the correspondent of a mutually corresponding world.

By Wm. Reynolds. The bright comet of the West—may it be a guide for the oppressed of all nations.

By Wm. Belcher. May free enquiry become the order of the day, and reason the guide of all.

By a visitor. Liberty—may the world be her temple—its inmates all mankind—and its foundation universal and untrammelled education.

By Benjamin Offen. The editors of the *Free Enquirer*—may they be as successful in their efforts as they are zealous in their labors to render knowledge universal. (Drank with three.)

By George Houston, jr. The day we celebrate—a gall to fanatics—a balm to freemen.

By Robert McFarlane. The writings of Thomas Paine. Honored be the pen of the wise over the sword of the brave: *this* destroys its enemies: *that* converts them into friends.

By Isaac Edge. The triumph of truth—no enemy left in the field but slander.

By Wm. Shields. Richard Carlile—the intrepid promulgator of liberal principles in Great Britain.

By George Houston, sen. Our liberal friends throughout the United States—may their efforts to organize *Free Press Associations* on rational principles be speedily crowned with success.

By W. T. Waldon. Joel Barlow, Thomas Jefferson and Elihu Palmer.

The health of MR. OFFEN, as chairman of the meeting, and of the *Free Press Association*; and of MR. HOUSTON, as secretary, and editor of the *Correspondent*, having been drank, (with three times three) the chairman observed that he wished to propose the landlord of the NEW-YORK COFFEE HOUSE; not merely because he had, on this occasion, provided excellent fare, but because he had promptly and fearlessly given the use of his house to the friends of MR. PAINE. Only a few years ago his predecessor, after having consented to provide a dinner in commemoration of this day, was induced to violate his engagement, from an apprehension that a compliance with his own feelings would be fatal to his interest. Regardless of such base considerations, the present occupant readily provided the necessary accommodations, for which he is entitled to the thanks and patronage of every friend of liberal principles.

Mr. Stackhouse, was then drank with acclamations.

The meeting adjourned at an early hour, highly gratified with the mental feast, and fully resolved to celebrate in future the natal day of one who has been correctly and emphatically designated—A NOBLE OF NATURE.

Celebration of Mr. Paine's birth-day at New-Hartford.—We have received the address, toasts, &c. of a numerous and respectable meeting held at New-Hartford, Oneida county, on the 29th ult., for the purpose of celebrating the anniversary of the birth of THOMAS PAINE, which we shall publish in our next. What will the superstitionists now say to this undeniable proof of the rapid advancement of liberal principles? Will they still continue their solemn assurances to their deluded followers, that, in spite of the progress which truth is every where making amongst us, the cause of religion is flourishing in every part of the union? Their *interest* will, no doubt, impel them to keep up the farce; the dread of losing their present income, and being obliged to betake themselves to some honest calling, will lead them to cling to the system as long as they can retain an ascendancy over the minds of an ignorant multitude. They cannot, however, be ignorant of the fact, that their empire is tottering to the very foundation, and that all their efforts will not be able to prevent its downfall.

Blasphemy.—We copy the following article from the Philadelphia United States Gazette, of the 31st ult. In No. 23, Vol. III., of the *Correspondent*, we made some remarks on the law of Pennsylvania respecting what is called blasphemy, to which we now wish to direct the attention of our readers; not because we had then exhausted the subject, but as preparatory to some farther observations on the impolicy of recognising suits in our courts which relate to religious opinions. Before, however, we can pay that attention to the question which its importance calls for,

we are desirous of knowing the *specific* charge on which the accused was convicted. The reporter, no doubt, says that "the words charged in the indictment, as spoken by him, (the accused) were of such a nature, and so vile and abominable, that it would, we think, be improper to publish them." Now, we happen to think, with due difference to this reporter, that whatever may have been the nature of the words which formed the ground of this prosecution, they were just as suitable for the pages of a newspaper as they were for the pages of an indictment. We want no star chambers, no inquisitions, no secret tribunals in this country. Our laws originate with the people, and it is only when their application to particular cases is *clearly defined*, that they can approbate the decision, if correct, or provide a remedy, if in opposition to the public good. It is the more necessary the *words*, said to have been spoken in this case, should be known, as a variety of opinions prevail as to what constitutes blasphemy. Each sect, in fact, accuse each other of being blasphemous. The trinitarian regards the unitarian in that light; the calvinist the arminian; the protestant the catholic; the presbyterian the episcopalian. It is no way improbable, if the accused belonged to one or other of these sects, that the judge and jury were connected with a religious party entertaining different views. This, of itself, was sufficient to lead to a verdict of guilty, whatever may have been the words made use of by the accused. But, be this as it may, justice demands that a full and fair report of this trial be given, without which the merits of the case cannot be understood, nor an opinion formed as to the propriety or impropriety of a verdict which affixes a stigma on the defendant—that may, possibly, be wholly unmerited.

From the United States Gazette.

Blasphemy.—We believe trials upon the charge of blasphemy are of very rare occurrence in this country—it is to be hoped that the offence against the laws are scarcely less rare. At the late court of quarter sessions, in Lancaster county, a trial of this kind occurred. From the Lancaster Intelligencer, we extract the following:

The most interesting trial was that of Samuel Sharp, for blasphemy. The words charged in the indictment, as spoken by him, were of such a nature, and so vile and abominable, that it would, we think, be improper to publish them. The words spoken were proved by several respectable witnesses, though most of the witnesses believed that the prisoner was under the influence of intoxicating liquors at the time he so expressed himself.

Mr. W. Hopkins, for the defendant, called several witnesses to prove that defendant was occasionally, or in some degree, deranged.

Mr. Champneys, on the part of the prosecution, opened in an elegant and interesting speech; showed the evil tendency of such expressions, both in a religious and in a moral point of view.

Mr. Hopkins next addressed the jury on the part of the defendant, with an eloquence worthy of a much better cause—relying, principally, on the defendant's incapacity to commit crime, he being, by the act of providence, deprived of the power of reason, or discriminating between right and wrong.

The case was concluded in a short speech from Mr. Parke, the attorney general, when Judge Franklin, with his usual ability, addressed the

jury—stated the nature of the charge, gave the definition of blasphemy, and dwelt upon the heinousness of the offence, both in a moral and religious point of view, and as affecting the essential interests of civil society. He said, that wilfully, premeditatedly and despitefully to blaspheme, to speak loosely or profanely, of Almighty God, Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or the Scriptures of truth, has been a statutable offence in Pennsylvania for more than one hundred and twenty-eight years ; that there was nothing in our manners or institutions which should render such a law, and the punishment denounced by it, less necessary now, than when it was enacted, since we stand equally in need now as formerly, of all that moral discipline, and of those principles of virtue which help to bind society together. That if the words were spoken in the manner laid in the indictment, they imported malice, and were punishable without more, unless it should be proved that the defendant was so far deprived of his reason, as to be unable to distinguish right from wrong. That a defence resting solely on the ground of insanity, is to be strictly scrutinized, and should be clearly proved. That the judgment of the jury must be made up from the facts adduced in evidence, and not from the opinions of witnesses, unless accompanied by the facts or incidents on which those opinions are founded. That criminal acts done by a man in a temporary state of derangement are not excusable on that ground ; if the derangement be occasioned by voluntary intoxication, and that want of intellect cannot be recognised as a defence, unless it be such as to render the party incapable of distinguishing good from evil.

The jury returned a verdict of *guilty*, and the man was fined twenty-six dollars and costs.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Morality of religion.—The history of religion is nothing more or less than a recital of the most barbarous deeds, the most horrid persecutions, the most inhuman carnage ! There is no system of religion but tends to shackle the faculties of man, to cramp his noble energies, to deaden his thirst for knowledge. In order to reconcile the absurdities, which naturally arise out of inconceivable mysteries, which abound in every incomprehensible system, man's imagination is tickled with fanciful illusions, his mind is fettered with a chain of destructive chimeras whose links are formed out of error and closed by delusion on the anvil of prejudice. In this state of bondage his mind remains in the keeping of his priests, whose existence depends upon his being considered the *agent* of an avenging deity.

The person who has the hardihood to break through the trammels of mental error, who has the courage to proclaim the falsehood of these delusive and petrifying systems, who has the honesty to lay bare the glaring impositions of the priest, is exposed to all the horrid, rancorous, and inhuman treatment that can be inflicted by a bewildered, by a maddened, by a fanatical multitude. Insanity pourtrays to them an almighty deity, pleased with their services, urging the destruction of every thing that fits

not with their own blind and cruel passions, which lead them to believe that every blow, struck at the heart of naked truth, and that the destroying, the mangling, the murdering, of every human being, who cannot subscribe to their evil, base, absurd dogmas, is the most pleasing devotion they can offer to an incensed deity.

Such is the morality of religion ! It is an engine employed by tyrants to sanctify the most destructive and baneful wars ! It renders holy the massacre of thousands, the plundering of millions, and after putting down the rising spirit of freedom, after conveying devastation into a country where regeneration and moral legislation is in its infancy, it immolates thousands upon the blood-stained altars of its idol ; and the spiritual conscience-keeping monsters, will offer up a thanksgiving, will perform a mass, will sing a requiem to the departed shades of those who have been sacrificed by the hypocrisy, the cruelty, and the deception of these destroyers of the human race.

Religious plays.—The most curious and characteristic of the ancient English shows, was an allegorical tournament, exhibited at the expense of the company of silk-weavers, who, from the monopoly with the Spanish Colonies, had attained great wealth and consequence at that period. It is thus described, from the records of the times, by a modern Spanish writer.

“ Near the Puerta del Perdon (one of the gates of the cathedral) a platform was erected, terminating under the altar dedicated to the virgin, which stands over the gate. Three splendid seats were placed at the foot of the altar, and two avenues railed in on both sides of the platform to admit the judges, the challenger, the supporters or seconds, the marshal, and the adventurers. Near one of the corners of the stage was pitched the challenger’s tent of black and brown silk, and in it a seat covered with black velvet. In front stood the figure of an apple-tree bearing fruit ; and hanging from its boughs, a target, on which the challenge was exposed to view.

“ At five in the afternoon, the Marshall, attended by his Adjutant, presented himself in the lists. He was followed by four children, in the dress used to represent angels, with lighted torches in their hands. Another child, personating Michael, the archangel, was the leader of a second group of six angels, who were the bearers of the prizes; a lamb and a male infant. The judges, justice and mercy appeared last of all, and took their appointed seats.

“ The sound of drums, fifes, and clarions, announced soon after, the approach of another group, composed of two savages, of gigantic dimensions, with large clubs on their shoulders, eight torch-bearers in black, and two infernal furies, and, in the centre, the challenger’s shield-bearer, followed by the challenger’s supporter or second, dressed in black and gold, with a plume of black and yellow feathers. This band having walked round the stage, the second brought the challenger out of the tent, who dressed uniformly with his supporter, appeared wielding a lance twenty-five hands in length.

The following is a list of the Adventurers, their attendants or torch-bearers, and supporters or seconds:—

Adam	Attendants 6 Clowns	Seconds, { Hope and Innocence.
Cain	6 Infernal Furies	Envy.

Abraham	6 Dwarfs, three Angels in the ha- bit of Pilgrims, and Isaac.	Faith.
Job	6 Pages	Patience.
David	6 Squires	Repentance.
Jeroboam	4 Jews	Idolatry.
Ahab	12 Squires	Covetousness.
John the Baptist	12 Squires	Divine Love and Grace.

"The dresses were all splendid, and suited to the characters.

"The adventurers engaged the challenger in succession, and all were wounded by the first stroke of his enormous lance. In this state they drew their swords, and fought with various success, some conquering the common enemy, while others yielded to his superior force. None, however, distinguished himself so much as the Baptist, who regardless of the wound he had received at the first onset, and being armed with fresh weapons by *Grace*, beat the adversary in every succeeding encounter. His extraordinary success was rewarded with a seat near the judges, and the lamb was awarded him as a prize.

"After this, the Marshal and his Adjutant, followed by *Grace* and *Divine Love*, left the stage. In a short time they re-appeared, followed by twelve youths as torch-bearers, the seven Virtues personated by children from four to five years of age, and nine angels, as the representatives of the nine hierarchies. Two Squires attended each of the Virtues and Angels; the whole train being closed by *Grace* and *Divine Love*, supporting the last adventurer, a beautiful child seven years old, who, as intended to represent the Holy Virgin, was more splendidly dressed than the rest, in a suit of sky-blue and white, sprinkled with golden stars, the hair flowing down the shoulders in curls, and held round the head by a twelve starred diadem.

"When the combatants faced each other, the challenger could not conceal his trepidation. The female Adventurer, on the other hand, would not use the lance with which she had entered the lists; for it bore the words *daughter of Adam*, in a banderole which hung from it. Having thrown away that weapon, she received another from the seconds, with the inscription *daughter of the Father*. At this moment the challenger darted his lance; but in his fear and confusion, he could not touch his adversary, while the heroine, on the contrary, taking an unerring aim at his breast, brought him instantly upon his knees; and the victory was completed with two other lances bearing the mottoes—*mother of the Son—spouse of the Holy Ghost*. Unhurt by her adversary, she had now laid him on the ground, and placed her foot and sword upon his neck, amidst a shout of universal acclamation. The judges awarded her the child of Jesus, as a prize, and seated her above all in a throne. Next under the virgin took their seats *Divine Love*, *Grace*, *Michael* and *John the Baptist*, and a general tournament ensued, in which all the other combatants engaged. The tournament being ended, the challenger and his second retired through the left avenue. The rest of the actors conducted the victor through that on the right, attended by one hundred and forty torch bearers, and a band of musicians singing her triumphal hymn which was echoed by the immense concourse."

Free Press Association.—The meetings of the Association are now held in the Bowery Long Room, opposite the Theatre. A lecture will be delivered to-morrow afternoon, (Sunday) at three o'clock, *in defence of liberal opinions*; being in continuation of that delivered on Sunday, the 1st inst.

Debating Institution.—On Sunday evening last, the question was again brought forward—*Whether a revelation by a supreme being has ever been made to man; and if so, what are the evidences?* This question promises to be productive of farther discussion than has yet taken place, in consequence of the no small degree of interest, manifest in both parties, as to its decision. The debate will be again opened to-morrow evening, in the same place, (Bowery Long Room) at half-past six o'clock.

Tickets of admission, (to be had at the door) three cents each. Ladies free.

The following works are sold at the Office of the *Correspondent*, New-York; by John Turner, 140 1-2 Market-st., Philadelphia; and by Joseph Savage, Syracuse:—

Ecce Homo; or a Critical Inquiry into the History of Jesus of Nazareth, 12mo. bds. 75 cents—bound and gilt, \$1.

VOLNEY'S RUINS OF EMPIRES; with the *LAW OF NATURE*; a new translation, with plates, 8vo, bound and gilt, \$1 25.

AGE OF REASON, pocket edition, with plates, 37 1-2 cents.

THE GOD OF THE JEWS AND CHRISTIANS; embellished with a correct likeness—25 cents.

Views of the Metaphysical and Physiological Arguments in favor of Materialism—25 cents.

The Scripture Doctrine of Materialism—25 cents.

AGENTS FOR THE CORRESPONDENT.

<i>Philadelphia, Pa.</i> John Turner, No. 140 1-2	Market-st.	Buffalo, N. Y. Isaac Smith.
<i>Paterson, N. J.</i> Robert Chiswell.		Hamilton, O. Robert Hewes.
<i>Red Hook, N. Y.</i> Erastus Marshal.		Kendal, O. Matthew Macey.
<i>Utica, N. Y.</i> D. J. Morris.		Dover, N. H. Joseph Lawton.
<i>Salina, N. Y.</i> J. Curtis.		Hudson, N. Y. Lewis Little.
<i>Geddisburg, N. Y.</i> R. S. Orvis.		Wilmington, De. Henry Heald.
<i>Laurenceburgh, In.</i> J. Perceval.		Rochester, N. Y. E. Geddens.
		Syracuse, N. Y. Joseph Savage.

The friends of liberal principles throughout the United States, are respectfully requested to accept of the Agency of the *Correspondent*. Four volumes are now completed, and sets can be had from the commencement, at the original subscription price, [\$1.50 a volume.]

The *CORRESPONDENT* is published every Saturday, at No. 6 William-street, New-York; and by Mr. John Turner, No. 140 1-2 Market-street, Philadelphia, at **THREE DOLLARS** per annum, in advance. All communications to be addressed to Mr. Geo. Houston, Editor, New-York.

GEORGE HOUSTON, JR., Printer, No. 6 William-street, New-York.